

Washington, DC—Wednesday, all three members of the New Mexico House delegation voted to reauthorize and expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Passed in the House today by a vote of 289-139, H.R. 2 ensures coverage for 11 million children nationwide. Under the new plan 7 million children who currently participate in SCHIP will continue to receive coverage and an additional 4 Million uninsured children will become eligible under the new program. With 93,000 uninsured children in the state, New Mexico has the third highest percentage of uninsured children in the nation. Currently, 16,525 children in New Mexico receive healthcare coverage through SCHIP.

"With rising unemployment and expected budget cuts across State government, SCHIP is more essential to the health of our children than ever," said Rep. Martin Heinrich. "Every child in New Mexico deserves health care coverage. Reauthorizing SCHIP is the change the American public wants and the change our children deserve."

"Proper healthcare is something none of New Mexico's children should go without. As the owner of a small business in southern New Mexico, I made sure that my employees and their families were provided affordable healthcare options" said Congressman Harry Teague. "With the economy in crisis it is important that we act quickly to extend health insurance coverage for the children of New Mexico's working families."

"Families in New Mexico are struggling during these difficult economic times, and today I proudly joined my colleagues in support of an expansion of health coverage for low-income,

uninsured children that will help children and families throughout the state,” said Luján. “In a time of rising unemployment, it is especially important to make sure that parents are able to get their children the health care they need to stay healthy and active.”

SCHIP was created in 1997 to provide health care coverage through federal matching funds for children in families that earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but not enough to afford private insurance. The bill is expected to reach President –Elect Obama’s desk during the first few weeks in office.

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